

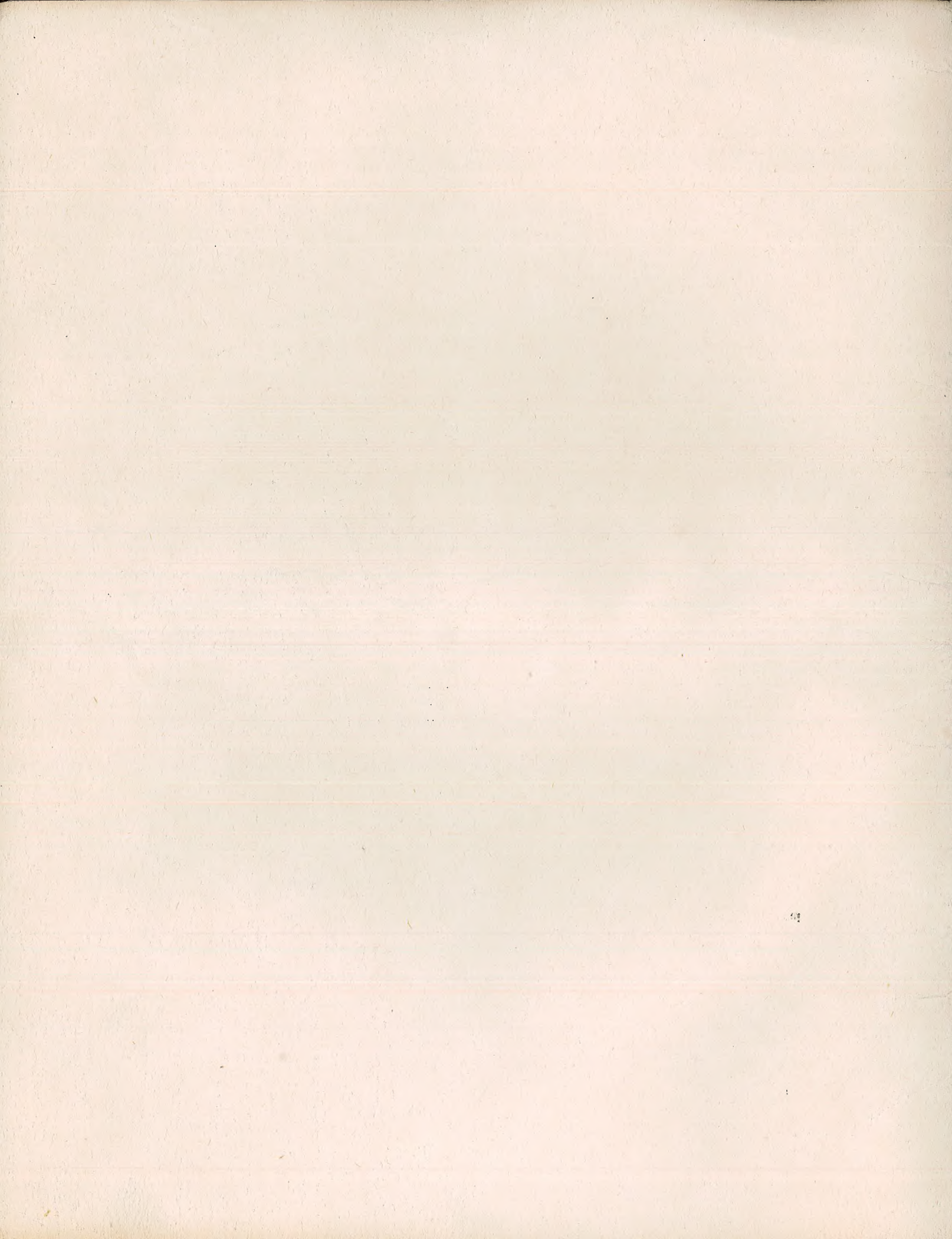


Fiftieth Anniversary

SAINT NATHANAEL
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH
ALLEGHENY AVENUE AT E STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

1897

1947





The Rev. Charles Bright Mauch, A. B., B. D., Th. M.
RECTOR



The Reverend George R. Miller
RECTOR-EMERITUS

H

E WHO TAKES UPON HIS SHOULDERS

the responsibility of writing a history of a Church is faced with a most difficult task. So many elements clamor for recognition, and deservedly so, that to overlook any of them renders the completed study neither complete nor accurate. What can the historian do? Should he concern himself primarily with personalities, or with chronological facts, or with statistics, or with spiritual growth and development? The true historian will marshal all available information and present it in a way that will indicate not only the tale of events but the very spirit by which those events rose up and took form and meaning. He has before him the record and, like an artist before his easel, tries to paint a crystal clear and all-inclusive panorama of the years that file out of the printed and written pages and from the accounts of witnesses.

The history of St. Nathanael Church contains all the usual problems, all the pitfalls. It is a history of personalities—shining lights, without whose labor and self-sacrificing adherence to Him and His Church the history could not have been made. It is a history of statistics—of marks of progress, without which the record would lack the drive and the urge which highlights every advance along the road to the kingdom. It is a history of facts too—facts which stand as milestones along the road of the years from the earliest beginnings to the present day, pointing proudly to this event and to that development and demanding a place. It is a history of light and shadow, of prosperity and depression, of color and drabness, all taken together and joined one to the other and given chronological order and spread out on the canvas of time, showing for all men the meaning and the significance of the Christian life and the struggle to attain that high place.

This will not be the first attempt at painting the picture of St. Nathanael Church and her development; an anonymous reporter left three yellowed pages, dated October 17, 1908, which preserves for us, albeit briefly, a reminiscence of occurrences during the first ten years of existence. It deserves to be repeated here in its entirety. Let's read it together:

"St. Nathanael Mission was begun in a small house at the corner of E Street and Clementine Street on February 7, 1897. This was the nucleus of a work which has grown and expanded ever since. We owed our power to purchase the lot on which the Church stands to the efforts of Miss Catherine Biddle, who, by personal solicitation, and with unflagging zeal, collected the necessary money from her friends and acquaintances.

"This noble lady, great in faith, in mind and in heart, had begun a very wonderful mission in the neighborhood of the Episcopal Hospital soon after its erection. St. Nathanael Church, as a mission development from that source, inherits much of its detail of organization. Holding Bible classes for men and women in the basement rooms of the Hospital, along with Sunday School classes, temperance society meetings, etc., Miss Biddle, with unceasing diligence, wonderful tact, and loving sympathy, did such a work as made her name a by-word for good in the neighborhood. Not the least sign of her power was her ability to draw to her assistance most valuable helpers in her great undertakings.

"The congregations which gathered for the Services in the Chapel of the Hospital became so large that, in order to accommodate them as well as the Sunday School classes and the various other meetings, it became necessary to erect a mission building. Miss Biddle collected the sum of twenty-eight thousand dollars for that undertaking, and the building was erected on the property of the Hospital and is now a part of St. Luke's Church, Huntingdon and B Streets. The work outgrew even that building, and additional property was purchased a few blocks to the North. This eventually became St. Nathanael Mission.

"As the number of her years increased, Miss Biddle felt that she must retire from active work. But, before she did so, she supplied the impetus for the development of the new mission by her counsels, by her sympathy, and by her great generosity. She personally collected the sum of \$6,000.00, aided in securing a lot, arranged for the placing of a mortgage on the property, and saw to it that the parish building was begun. Through the help of friends, the mortgage was soon paid off and additional property adjacent to the land purchased for the sum of \$2,250.00. This year (1908) the parish building has been moved to make way for the new Church."

Let's leave this account for the moment, this chronicle which tells much but not all of the story, and try, from the records, to draw together the loose ends and fill the gaps. First, there is Miss Catherine Biddle, an honored name in the annals of Episcopal Hospital and of St. Luke's Church. It represents a lifetime of devotion and sacrifice, of great influence and development in the lives of hundreds of people, and of interest in others above personal interest. It may rightly be said that St. Luke's Church stands as a monument to Miss Catherine Biddle, as a reminder to all those who would seek the Master of the joy and the saintliness which comes when He is seen face to face.



The house at the corner of E Street and Clementine Street soon became inadequate for the constantly expanding work, and Miss Biddle's name appears on an indenture dated 1897 which describes the property "on the Northwest corner of E Street and Allegheny Avenue, in the 33rd Ward of the City of Philadelphia, containing on Allegheny Avenue ninety-seven feet six inches to Hartville Street and extending in length Northward one hundred and forty-five feet," which property was selected by the Rev. Mr. Bagley, then Minister-in-charge of the Chapel at Episcopal Hospital. The indenture also contains the name of William Barrett as "party of the first part" and William Moore, Buckley Haigh, Samuel Steele, and John Crawford as "parties of the second part."



The Parish House was built, and Services were held there for many years, with class rooms and meeting rooms on the first floor and the Church on the second. Who among the older members will ever forget the old board walk, the picket fence, the pumps at Hartville Street, the vast open spaces surrounding the building, and especially the seat always occupied by Miss Annie Buchanan, another noble character who took up the work so admirably begun by Miss Biddle? A niece of James Buchanan, fifteenth President of the United States, she was untiring in her efforts on behalf of this growing mission. At a meeting of the Vestry, held on Friday evening, June 17, 1927, the following resolutions were presented and unanimously adopted:

"Resolved, that in the death of Miss Annie E. Buchanan, St. Nathanael Church has lost a devoted friend and inspiring leader. Her long life was spent in the unselfish service of others, and, for the past fifty years, her activities were centered in Philadelphia's great textile district known as Kensington. Miss Buchanan was a Bible Class teacher in the Hospital Mission when its over-crowded condition compelled the establishment of a Mission in the neighborhood of Allegheny Avenue and E Street.

"It was the custom, at the Hospital Mission, when a new mission became necessary, that one of the Bible Class teachers be delegated to the new work. Thus, Miss Buchanan came to St. Nathanael's. From the beginning, she was actively identified with the work. Until recent years, she taught the Men's Bible Class on Sunday mornings, The Boy's and Mothers' Bible Classes on Sunday afternoons. During the week, she had charge of a Temperance Society, the Mothers' Meeting, and the Ladies' Aid Society. She showed her interest by giving generously not only of her time but also of her means. Much of our material success has been due to her, and no one can think of St. Nathanael's without feeling deeply gratified for what she did and gave to us.

"As long as St. Nathanael lasts, her unselfish life will be cherished and the memory of her as teacher and friend will be an inspiration.

"We deeply regret her passing and extend our heartfelt sympathy to her family. She fought a good fight and has entered into a well-earned rest. May light perpetual shine upon her . . . "

The Mission at Allegheny and E grew by leaps and bounds, and it soon became apparent to the Vicar, the Rev. George R. Miller, that plans for further expansion must soon be made. He had come to the young mission in 1903 and had plunged into the work with the enthusiasm which marked his entire ministry. If St. Luke's Church can be considered as a monument to the achievement of Miss Catherine Biddle, then St. Nathanael Church can likewise be considered as a monument to the work of Mr. Miller. Through his efforts, and with the financial assistance of friends in the parish and the diocese, the present beautiful Church became a reality. When the privilege of erecting a new House of God came to him, he built mightily and handsomely the Gothic structure into which he put so very much of himself.

We're getting a bit ahead of the "chronicle of 1908," so let's return to it and to the facts contained therein:

"The location of the new property was on the extreme edge of the built-up portion of the city, and the wisdom and foresight of choosing the spot, then a piece of farm land, has long since been abundantly proved. The people of the neighborhood were then, as they are now, of the working class, employed in the neighboring factories. Although unable to give large sums of money, they gave of their time and their energies 'beyond their power.'

"We owe it to the liberal assistance of the Convocation of Germantown and of the Board of Missions in the Diocese of Pennsylvania that we have been able to live and grow.

"The new Church, now in process of erection, is the result of the efforts of our Vicar, the Rev. George R. Miller, who has, with unfailing earnestness, raised up for us friends in other congregations whose generous gifts have made it possible for us to build at this time.

"We who have had our Church home for the past eleven years in the Parish Building feel great affection for it. There we have had regular Sunday Services, Sunday Schools, Bible Classes, Mothers' Meetings, and societies of different kinds. Many have been Baptized, many Confirmed, many Married, and over many of our friends the Burial Service has been read.

"Other clergy who have had charge of St. Nathanael Mission were Mr. McCra and the Rev. Jacob Weinman. We hope and pray that the new Church may carry on the great work already so far on the way, and that as it is indeed the House of God, it may prove to thousands the 'Gate of Heaven'."

There we have it—the history of St. Nathanael Mission from February 7, 1897 to October 17, 1908. Years of tremendous growth and development; years of change and movement; years lighted and colored by the activity and influence of devoted servants of God—men and women who gave unselfishly of time and means so that the Church might be established.

Nor was this work recognized merely within the confines of the neighborhood or within the boundaries of the parish. Read what the Church Standard, a periodical of the day, dated December 8, 1906, has to say about the work:

"One of the most characteristic of institutional works in the city of Philadelphia is being carried on at Allegheny Avenue and E Street, in the Kensington district, where, under the direction of the Rev. George Miller, a vigorous work is prosecuted by St. Nathanael Mission.

"The nature of the work may be better understood when one learns that there are acres upon acres of two-story houses in the vicinity, and that it is rare indeed to see one larger. The people all work in the mills in the vicinity, and are busy all day. In the evening, however, the Church is open for work, and every evening sees something going on. Meetings of all kinds are held, and the needs of the individual are met by the different societies of the Church.

"The work is being done by the Vicar alone, although a parish worker to go in and out among the people would be a great assistance, could one be had. As the work is of a missionary character altogether, being supported in part by the Convocation of Germantown, there seems at present no way of providing the necessary funds."

The record of the first eleven years shows the following spiritual activity in the Mission: 451 Baptisms, 66 Weddings, 200 Confirmed members, 116 Burials. Tremendous activity marked also the social life of the Church. Miss Buchanan was head of the Mothers' Meeting, which had been organized shortly after her arrival. Mrs. Catherine Fletcher had charge of the Girls' Friendly Society, which had been organized on November 22, 1906. Although no longer connected with this organization, Mrs. Fletcher continues her active interest in the parish to the present time. More than fifty men were on the rolls of the Men's Society of the day, the officers of which were Robert Rollison, C. F. Moore, Oliver Roberts, Frank Peak, and James Heaton.



A large proportion of the congregation belonged to the Temperance Society, presided over by Miss Buchanan. Other organizations held the attention of the members and friends of the parish.

Our anonymous historian ended his chronicle with the moving of the Parish House. The records of the Church add nothing more to this information, but evidently, from the old prints taken at the time, the building was moved, with its contents relatively undisturbed, from its old location to a point about seventy feet to rear of the property to clear the way for the new Church soon to be erected.

The Parish House was raised five degrees onto the new foundation and permanently secured. An entrance was cut into the E Street side of the building, and the base was built up from the foundation to meet the old walls of the structure.

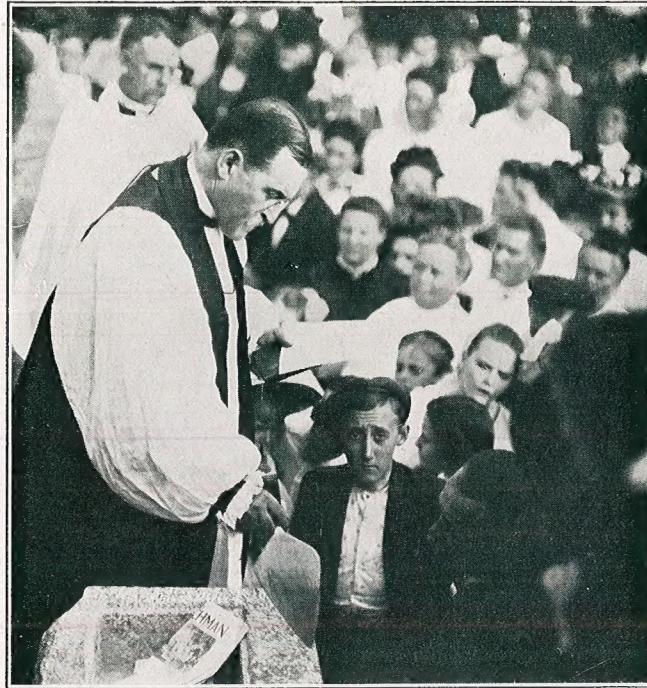


Then came the memorable day for the laying of the cornerstone for the new Church. An outdoor Service was held on the grounds at three o'clock in the afternoon of October 17, 1908, attended by a "large and interested crowd." The Rt. Rev. James Bowen Funsten, Bishop of Boise, assisted by the Dean of the Convocation of Germantown, the Very Rev. Jacob LeRoy, officiated at the impressive ceremony. Notice in the picture the absence of houses across the street almost to Kensington Avenue.

The Church was under construction for almost a year and a half, during which time the Services continued uninterruptedly in the Parish House, along with the Church School and the meetings of the various organizations. Whatever inconveniences there were during the period were taken with good spirit. Every phase of the building was noted by the neighborhood; everyone commented on the beauty and the workmanship as the Church gradually took shape, with its fine Gothic line and its impressive size.

Many of the older members can remember the day the pews arrived, the day the Altar was set into place, the day the lighting fixtures were installed. Everyone became thrilled and excited as the day of completion drew ever closer.

An air of expectation pervaded the entire neighborhood. The Church Committee and the congregation drew together to begin plans for the Service of Consecration, determined to celebrate in a manner worthy of the occasion. New vestments for the Choir were purchased, and special music decided upon.



Finally the Church was completed, and the Service of Consecration was set. Engraved invitations were sent out to the hundreds of members, friends, and well-wishers, and more than four hundred people crowded into the new edifice to hear the Rt. Rev. Henry Douglas Robinson consecrate the new House of God at a solemn and inspiring Service. Bishop Robinson, himself consecrated one month before the building of the Church was begun, as second Missionary Bishop of Nevada, and destined to serve as Bishop only five years until his untimely death, thrilled the huge congregation with his words of admiration for a tremendous job well done and his hope that the Church would be used by them in the extension of the work so nobly begun.

After the Service, the Choir, attired in their new cassocks and cottas, were assembled along the E Street side of the Church for their photograph. Some of these people are still singing in the Choir; many others continue their active association with the worship and activity of the Church.

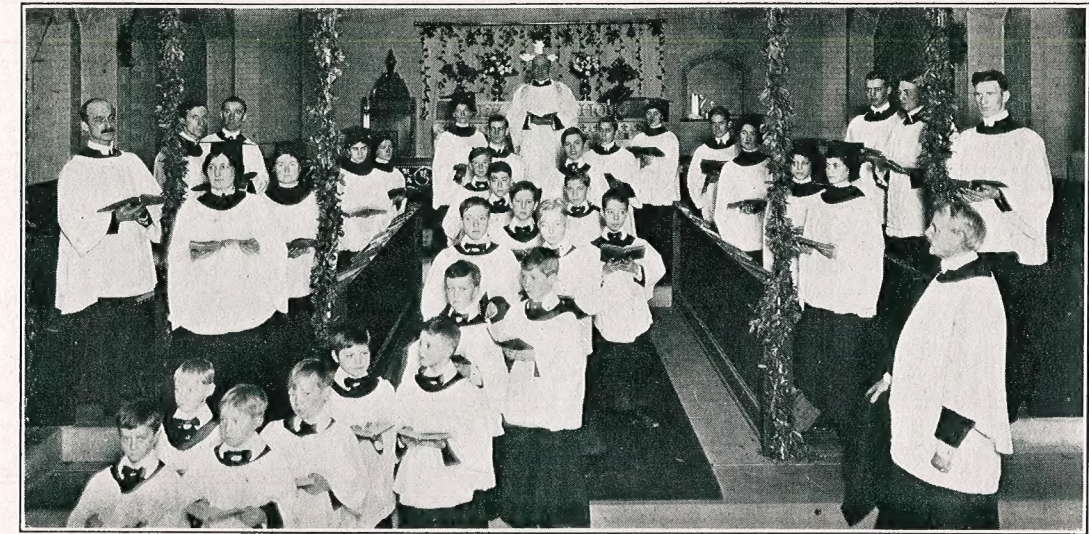


The photograph of the interior of the Church shows the original lighting fixtures and the absence of stained glass windows in the Nave and Chancel. Notice also that the Reredos is missing, along with the present Pulpit and Lectern.



The new Church was eminently fitted for the work of extending the kingdom of God. The parish building was refitted to house the Church School and the organizations; the second floor furnishings were removed in order that an assembly room might be provided. An additional wing was erected in 1915 to supplement the available space, and this new structure included game rooms in the basement, a Mothers' Meeting Room and Bible Class Room on the first floor. The Class Room has since been made over into a Chapel seating one hundred, a project which was done entirely by the men of the parish. The plans for this wing called for a second floor, which was not built at the time. Perhaps some future year will see this work completed as originally planned.

The Church School was a large one during these years. There were many teachers on the staff and a large student body. Robert Rollison was Superintendent, and Oliver Roberts was Treasurer. One of the classes, formed in 1912



and begun by Bertha Morris, is worthy of special note. Edwin Moore, Jr., Wilmer Brogden, Arthur Gaul, John Platt, and Wilfred Newton made up the class. In 1915, after Ben Exley and Robert McCaig had successively succeeded Miss Morris, Miss Mary Patterson became teacher. At this time, in addition to the above-mentioned members, the class included Earl Glazier, Theodore Geisser, Howard Soper, Geoffrey Haynes, and William Latham. Since 1925, this class has reunited yearly at the home of their former teacher, now Mrs. Hilton Kent; they participate in an annual corporate Communion; and every June they get together with their families for a picnic.

The records do not reveal a similar case of a class which has kept together in later years in an unorganized but closely-knit group as has this one.

A St. Nathanael Boys' Club was in existence during these pre-war years. They were interested in soccer in particular and in all sports generally. The First World War drew many of the men of the Church out of the ranks of the Congregation and the Choir, and from every male organization of the Church. They were sadly missed and the Church kept in touch with them as closely as possible while they were away from home. A Welcome Home Banquet was held for them in the Parish House on June 24, 1919. Prominent speakers highlighted a "Musical and Literary Program."



The Church settled down once again to the work of the kingdom with her ranks filled and her schedule complete. Many additions to the fabric of the Church were made during the years that followed. Miss Buchanan, whose interest in the Mission went unceasingly on, was the donor of a magnificent gift when she, on April 20, 1920, completed arrangements for the installation of three stained glass windows in the front facade facing Allegheny Avenue. The Willet Studios made the windows at a cost of \$3,000.00. On August 12, 1921, arrangements were made to have the organ, recently purchased from Grace Church, Mount Airy, transported to St. Nathanael Church. The organ was installed some months later.

The 25th Anniversary Service was held on February 5, 1922, in the evening, and was attended by 289 members and friends of the parish. Mr. Manuel joined with Mr. Miller in this celebration, and an impressive Service was held. The large number were present despite the terrific rain storm which lashed the city. The Men's Club entertained the men of the parish on the following evening with a program of "Speakers, Music, Refreshments, and 'Smokes'." On Tuesday evening, the Girls' Friendly Society and the Mothers' Meeting played host to the women of the parish. The Church Committee had charge of the program on Wednesday evening for the entire congregation.

The Charter of Incorporation, dated April 4, 1923, includes the names of the following men as Vestrymen: Harry Allen, Shem Buckley, James Cameron,

Ernest Capewell, David Hamill, George Miller, Jr., Alexander Hetherington, Edwin Moore, Ernest Moulson, George Newton, Oliver Roberts, and Robert Rollison. Practically all of these men began their association with the Church from its infancy; Oliver Roberts continues to be actively associated with the Vestry, his long service having been recognized some years ago with his nomination as Rector's Warden.

In the fall of 1923, most of the members of Miss Patterson's Church School Class, along with some of their contemporaries, met to form a sports club. At their first meeting, they voted to call themselves the Nomad's Field Club. William Newton was elected to be first President; Geoffrey Haynes, Vice President; John Platt, Secretary and Treasurer; and William Allen, Business Manager.

Regular weekly meetings were held at the homes of the members, and an ambitious program of sports was instituted. During the years that followed, they participated in soccer, baseball, bowling, tennis, pocket billiards, and ping pong. George Newton was soccer coach; Frank Willis had charge of the baseball team. James Cameron, recently elected to the first Vestry of the Church, was a far-sighted and respected advisor for this Club. Earl Glazier served as President during 1925 and 1926; John Platt served four terms in the same capacity. At one time, 26 of the 31 members of the Club were also members of the Church. William Andrews was tennis champion during 1926, and he teamed with his brother, Jim, to capture the doubles crown.

Although not directly connected with the Church, this group was so closely drawn to it through its members and its advisor that no history of St. Nathanael would be complete without some reference to it and to its activities.



A communication dated July 28, 1926, also from the Willet Studios of Philadelphia, was found, being an agreement to "make and set in place complete the three lancet windows in the Chancel over the Altar for the sum of \$2,250.00. This price assures you our best workmanship and material, a thoroughly staunch and weatherproof job, strongly barred and leaded, all painted portions to be fired in the kiln a sufficient number of times to render them absolutely fadeless as the work of Albrecht Durer, another medieval glass artist, whose work has stood the test of centuries." This series of windows was placed in the church in honor of the Rector, the Rev. George Miller, marking his brilliant leadership during the 23 years of his ministry in the parish.

Another magnificent gift was made to the Church by the Misses Caroline and Helen Woodason, in Sacred Memory of their Parents and Sister. This gift included the appointments in the Sanctuary, along with the Lectern and Pulpit. Other gifts included, during the years, 21 Nave stained glass windows, the last given in Sacred Memory of Bertha Morris Sancken; the Nave lights; the Font, which was given in 1926 by the Cradle Roll; and the plaque in the vestibule of the Church, placed there in Sacred Memory of Annie Buchanan soon after her death on May 30, 1927.



The night of February 10, 1930 marked the re-organization of the Men's Club, which had been dissolved some years previously.

According to the minutes, "at the suggestion of the Rector, Rev. George R. Miller, a meeting of men was held on the above date for the purpose of organizing a Men's Club. The Rector explained that he had in mind an organization social in character to meet once every month, each meeting to include some feature of interest. The following officers were elected: Thomas Pagdin, President; William Oldfield, Vice-President; George Miller, Jr., Secretary; and George Smith, Treasurer."

Considerable improvement was made to the game room, reading room, and shuffle-board room during the ensuing years by this active organization; most of the equipment now in use was purchased by them.

An announcement of a Minstrel Show, held October 16 and 17, 1928 included the names of Wilmer Brogden, Irwin Lang, Alfred McClelland, Walter Jones, William Scrivens, Lynn Hormann, Clarence Stone, John Buckley, Harold Farrow, Ernest Moulson, and George Miller; Norman Platt and Fred Miller staged a one-act play, and Edna Wolstenholme gave her interpretation of "One Fast Stepper."

By 1932 the following organizations were active in the parish: Women's Auxiliary, Girls' Friendly Society, Sunday School Choir, Men's Club, Mothers' Meeting, Altar Guild, Boys' Club, and the Choir.

In November of 1940 there appeared for the first time "*The Bulletin Board*," a single-page summary of the happenings at the Church, with George Miller, Jr., as editor. A number of special events were noted, one of which was the following: "The Hallowe'en Party given by the Sunday School on October 25th was attended by a large number of spooks. There were prizes for fancy, comic, and original costumes."

The publication of December, 1940, contained this item, among others: "The annual contest for Volunteer Choirs of the Diocese of Pennsylvania was held in St. Matthew's Church on Saturday, November 9th. Our Choir won the Bishop Taitt Award—first prize. Congratulations to the Choir and its director, Mrs. Richard Farrow."

The "Bulletin" for March, 1941, announced the death of Mrs. Margaret MacBain, the mother of the Accounting Warden; it also described the 38th Anniversary of Mr. Miller as Rector of St. Nathanael Church. The May issue of 1941 stated that on Sunday, April 20th, the Rector announced to the congregation "that he had tendered his resignation, effective September 15, to the Vestry. He is going to retire after nearly fifty years in the ministry." A few items down on the same "Bulletin" was seen this announcement: "Last Sunday, May 4th, there was a rumor to the effect that a new Rector had been selected. This is not true. As suggested by Mr. Miller in his resignation, a committee was appointed by the Vestry to consult with the Bishop. The committee, consisting of Messrs. MacBain, Miller, and Dr. Shaffer, called upon Bishop Taitt on April 28, 1941. At the present time, three clergymen suggested are being considered. As these men have not been approached directly, the Vestry cannot make known their identity."

Mr. Miller continued to identify himself actively with the parish he had served so many years until March 1, 1942, at which time his successor, the Rev. Charles M. Coldren, joined him in a Service of Holy Communion attended by more than 200 people. Mr. Miller returned the next year, March 7, for the Anniversary Service. The same year, late in August, Mr. Coldren having joined the Navy as a Chaplain, Mr. Miller again returned to his parish and assisted in various of the Services, along with Dean Stockman, Rev. Morris, Rev. Francis of the University of Pennsylvania, and Bishop Hart.

On February 6, 1944, the Rev. Charles B. Mauch, then assisting the Rector at Grace Church, Mount Airy, was called to the parish as Deacon-in-charge. Following his ordination to the Priesthood on June 3 of the same year in Grace Church, he became Priest-in-charge. The following Spring, having received a call from the Vestry as Rector, he accepted, and was instituted as Rector at a Service held on September 30, with Bishop Hart and more than 200 people in attendance.

During the past few years, many improvements have been made in the buildings, including the installation of oil heat and the remodeling of the second floor of the Parish House. Various of the roofs have been repaired. The Sacristy is, at the present time, being improved. Many additions have been made to the equipment of the parish and administrative changes have been made, especially in regard to the financial program.

The following men have gone out from St. Nathanael into the Priesthood: George Buckley Krantz, William Powell, William Hamilton Aulenbach, and Leonard Joseph Sachs. St. Nathanael is the Mother Church of St. Gabriel's, Roosevelt Boulevard at Front Street.

There we have it—a brief account of tremendous years. A summary of a brilliant half-century of progress and development, during which time the parish moved from a small house to a large and beautiful church building; during which time the mission became a self-supporting parish; during which time the Church became a part of the Convocation of North Philadelphia. The budget has been increased tremendously; the number of pledge members is mounting; attendance in Church is appreciably larger. And it has all been due to the consecrated men and women—to Mr. Miller, and Annie Buchanan, and Catherine Biddle, and to the hundreds of others who supplied the drive and the labor and the support—without whose industry and devotion it all would have been utterly impossible.

Mr. Miller was unanimously elected Rector Emeritus by the Vestry shortly after his active leadership had come to a close, a fitting climax to an accomplishment of which any priest could be justly proud.

We pray Thee, Father, that Thou wilt grant to us that we might take this half-century of life in Thee and hold it in our hands as a model, to catch its spirit and mark its form, so that we too, standing as we are on the threshold of the second fifty years of service in Thy name, might fashion yet another harvest as brilliant and as bountiful; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

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